

PLANET MERCURY

Closest to the sun, Mercury is the second smallest planet in our solar system. It has an orbital period of 87.97 Earth days and rotates on its axis once every 59 Earth days. The average surface temperature is 800 degrees Fahrenheit. Because the planet has no atmosphere to retain heat, nighttime temperatures on the surface can drop to -290 degrees Fahrenheit.

Viewing Mercury through a telescope the planet's surface looks much like that of Earth's moon. Since the planet has little atmosphere to slow down meteoroids its surface is scarred with craters – likely a result of meteoroid impacts.

Mercury Facts

Namesake: Messenger of the Roman gods

Distance from the sun: 35.98 million miles

Rotation period: 58.65 Earth days

Equatorial Radius 1.516 miles

Gravity: 0.38 of Earth's gravity

Mass: 0.055 of Earth's mass